

THE CATSKILL CENTER FOR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

Summary of Community Planning Work

Redevelopment Plan for Mt. Utsayantha

The Village of Stamford, located along the eastern edge of Delaware County, owns a 20-acre parcel of land at the top of Mt. Utsayantha. The property was donated to the Village by a descendant of one of Stamford's founding families in 1917 for use as a park.

Over the years, the site has deteriorated in condition and become the target of vandals. The wooden picnic tables that used to be located there have been broken apart and burned, and nearly all of the masonry fireplaces have been destroyed. Old walking trails that once looped around the mountaintop are overgrown and blocked by fallen trees. A steel fire tower – officially closed in 1989 – is still standing but vandals destroyed the associated observer's cabin. Perhaps most saddening is a wooden observatory (built in 1926) that is in poor condition and has been badly vandalized.

Given its condition, the building – once a souvenir shop with an observation deck for tourists – has become a liability to the Village. Faced with the decision to either save this historic building or tear it down, in December 2002 Stamford Mayor Waylen Bray approached The Catskill Center for assistance in evaluating the structure and examining the potential for redevelopment of the entire site.

This plan, completed in October of 2003, examines potential options for the redevelopment of Mt. Utsayantha as a tourist destination and a valuable recreational resource for the people of Stamford and the surrounding area. It contains information and presents various options for restoration of the observatory and fire tower, as well as a landscape master plan for the park itself. It covers issues like access and security, and also examines the potential for additional trail development on the mountain.

